The Tale of Two Terrors

A Ghostly Misunderstanding[1]

I had recently built a new house and moved into the outskirts of the town, right next to the graveyard. Everyone questioned my decision, but my neighbor, Senthil, whose house was at the end of the street, immediately tried to scare me. He warned me that four ghosts… four torsos without arms or legs wandered near the graveyard and advised me never to go there alone.

Hearing about these torso-ghosts sparked a strange desire in me; I wanted to see at least one of them. Dismissing Senthil as a coward, I bravely set out alone one night. When I left, the power was on and the streetlights were glowing, so I didn't bother taking a tourch-light.



[1] translated version of https://archive.org/details/20260602_20260602_1435

However, just as I approached the eerie spot, the power went out, plunging everything into pitch darkness. It was as if it was perfectly timed with the sudden appearance of a **headless, legless torso** floating right in front of me! My legs shook violently, and I was rooted to the spot, unable to run or even turn my head. My mouth went dry with fear, and no sound came out when I tried to scream.

I deeply regretted my foolish bravado and wished I had brought a flashlight. I stood there shivering in absolute terror, praying to my ancestors and gods, while the mysterious figure seemed to sway in the dark.

Suddenly, by some divine grace, the power returned. The streetlights flickered back on, and the terrifying figure instantly turned around and vanished into the path it came from. Gathering my wits, I hurried back home. When my wife asked where I had been in the dark, I silently washed my face and went to bed, spending a sleepless night wondering why I had tried to be so brave.

A few days passed, and Senthil—who usually visited us every evening and affectionately called my wife "Akka" (sister)—didn't show up. My wife told me that Senthil had caught a mysterious fever. I went to visit him the next day, and his mother lamented that the fever would spike, drop with medication, and then stubbornly return, baffling the doctors.



I sat with Senthil, who looked pale but offered a faint 'Mona Lisa smile". When I asked him what was truly wrong, he hesitated and made me promise not to tell his mother or my wife. He then lifted his pillow to reveal heaps of holy ash (*vibhuthi*) packets hidden underneath. He confessed that a few nights ago, he had come looking for me in the dark since the power was out. Suddenly, he saw a **headless, legless torso** floating in the dark, staring right at him! The moment the power returned, he had run for his life, and the sheer terror had caused his relentless fever.

In an instant, everything became crystal clear to me. On that dark night, I was wearing a dark purple lungi and my dark hair blended completely into the pitch-black night. Senthil could only see my **white baniyan** (undershirt) floating in the dark, mistaking me for a headless ghost! And ironically, I had seen him in the dark and thought *he* was the ghost! When the power came back, we had both just run away from each other in pure terror.

I tightly held his hand, explained the hilarious truth, and told him to stop all the medicines and holy ash.



The next evening, Senthil was fully recovered, back at my house, laughing and chatting happily with my wife. My wife joked about my constantly grumpy face, saying I rarely smiled. I casually replied, "It's okay to have a grumpy face, as long as it's not completely dark," smiling at our little secret. Knowing the real story behind the darkness, Senthil just couldn't stop laughing.

by
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